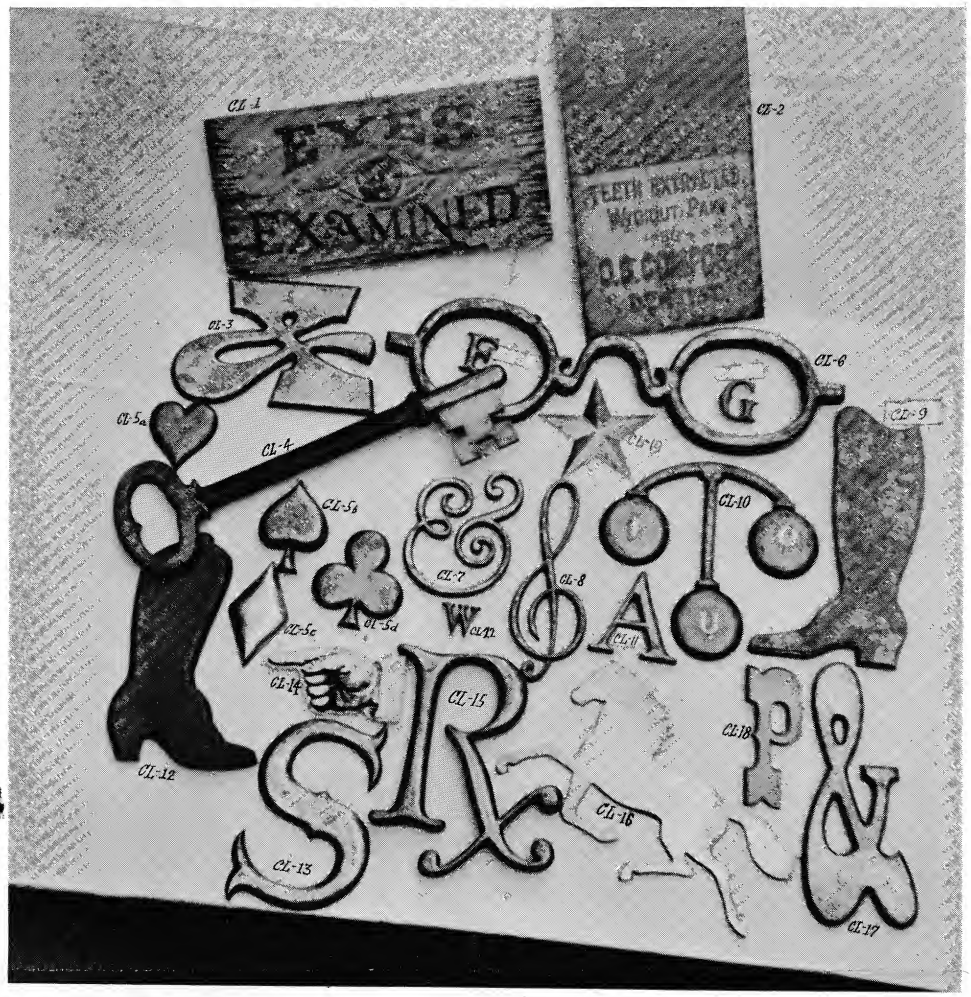

CATALOGUE - 1965

CL- 1	Eyes Examined sign, wood, 11"x26"	$30.00
CL- 2	Dental sign, wood, 14"x24"	12.00
CL- 3	Ampersand 10½" tall, antique gold	10.00
CL- 4	Key 30", antique gold	21.00
CL- 5a	Heart 6", antique gold	4.00
CL- 5b	Spade 7", antique gold	4.00
CL- 5c	Club 8", antique gold	4.00
CL- 5d	Diamond 8", antique gold	4.00
CL- 6	Spectacles, 35½", antique gold	24.00
CL- 7	Curly ampersand, 9", antique gold	12.00
CL- 8	Musical "G" cleff, 15", antique gold	15.00
CL- 9	Boot, 20", antique gold	12.00
CL-10	Hock Shop Symbol, antique gold, 14"	12.00
CL-11	French Roman Alphabet	
	stocked in 2", 4", 6", 9", cut from 2", 4"	3.00
	¾" stock, face is ½ round finish 6"	3.50
	can be had in prime coated paint 9"	4.50
CL-12	Boot, 17", antique gold	12.00
CL-13	Fishtail Roman letters, 12", antique gold	9.00
CL-13	Fishtail Roman letters, 5", antique gold	4.50
CL-13	Fishtail Roman letters, 3", antique gold	4.50
CL-14	Pointing Finger, black and white, points left or right	3.00
CL-15	Prescription Symbol, antique gold, 15"	15.00
CL-16	Carved Horse, antique gold, 19"	12.00
CL-17	Ampersand, antique gold, 17"	10.00
CL-18	Barnum, antique gold, 10"	7.50
CL-19	Prismatic star, antique gold, 9"	3.00

(NEWS fotos by Judd Mehlman)

Meyer Blum studies imitation antiques that have taken over his sign-painting business.

Sign-painter-turned-wood-carver, Nick Cheffo at the band saw with carved wooden boot designed as wall plaque.

So What's New? Antiques Hammered Out in a Hurry

metal leaf and umber, but sometimes the sign-makers go further in their pursuit of the look of age.

"Some signs," says Cheffo, "we beat with chains and a hammer." Others are hung outside in the letter-littered back yard behind the shop where wind and weather add their touch.

There is obviously nothing new about antiquing, but Cheffo and Blum are doing it so successfully that sometimes they have to argue with a customer to convince him he is getting a genuine fake.

A Good Shellacking— Disreputable Look

First step in antiquing is shellacking. Orange shellac is applied the size where it sticks and can be smoothed down.

Some gold leaf isn't gold at all, but gold-colored metal leaf. This is more commonly used, and for good reason. The real thing is about six times more expensive.

Once the gold leaf (or metal or aluminum leaf) covers the wood, the piece is shellacked or sprayed. Then raw umber is painted on and wiped off. This is what really ages things.

The umber that remains in the grooves and gouges is dark—just where age would have darkened them. The smooth surfaces are brighter, just where time and handling would have polished them. If a little of the red sizing shows through, the effect is even antique-er.

Old Belgium Village—

Hammered Out in a Hurry

By KITTY HANSON

A vogue for brand new antiques and genuine imitations has turned two New York sign painters into a couple of popular fakers, and has created a business so unique it doesn't have a name.

Eight years ago, Corby Leeds, firm name for veteran sign painters Nick Cheffo and Meyer Blum, was simply one among dozens of sign-painting shops in Manhattan. Then one day a young actress stopped in to order some wooden letters.

She wanted to label an important room in her home with an earthy French word. Too embarrassed to say the word, she tried ordering the

DAILY NEWS
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letters at random—two S's, a P, an R—but it didn't take Cheffo (whose wife is French) long to decode the word or to take the order.

Corby Leeds didn't make wooden letters, but Cheffo saw no reason why they shouldn't. He made up the sign and before long, other theatre people, decorators, photographers and art directors were ordering signs and letters.

Today, the firm handles around 15,000 letters a year, most of them antiqued, and nearly every one a custom job. (There are other companies producing wooden letters for signs, but Cheffo and Blum are probably the only sign painters who personally create their own.)

In fact, Cheffo and Blum are not so sure they're really sign-painters any more.

A few years ago, sign-painting made up two-thirds of their business, with the creation of wooden letters and signs making up the other third. Today, it's the other way around, and in addition to letters of all styles and dimensions, the repertoire of imitations now includes antique signs and symbols.

The window of the shop on Second Avenue is a dusty jumble of gold letters, G-clefs, carved wooden boots, wooden nickels of wagon-wheel dimensions, monster shears, keys, and spoons, and carved wooden hands pointing thataway in all directions.

Reproducing the alphabet — or anything else — in wood isn't as simple as it sounds. First the outer shape of the letter is cut out of wood on a band saw. Then the inner curves and openings are cut out on a jig saw. Then, because these are not just flat-faced letters, but rounded or faceted, shaping is done on the router or beveler.

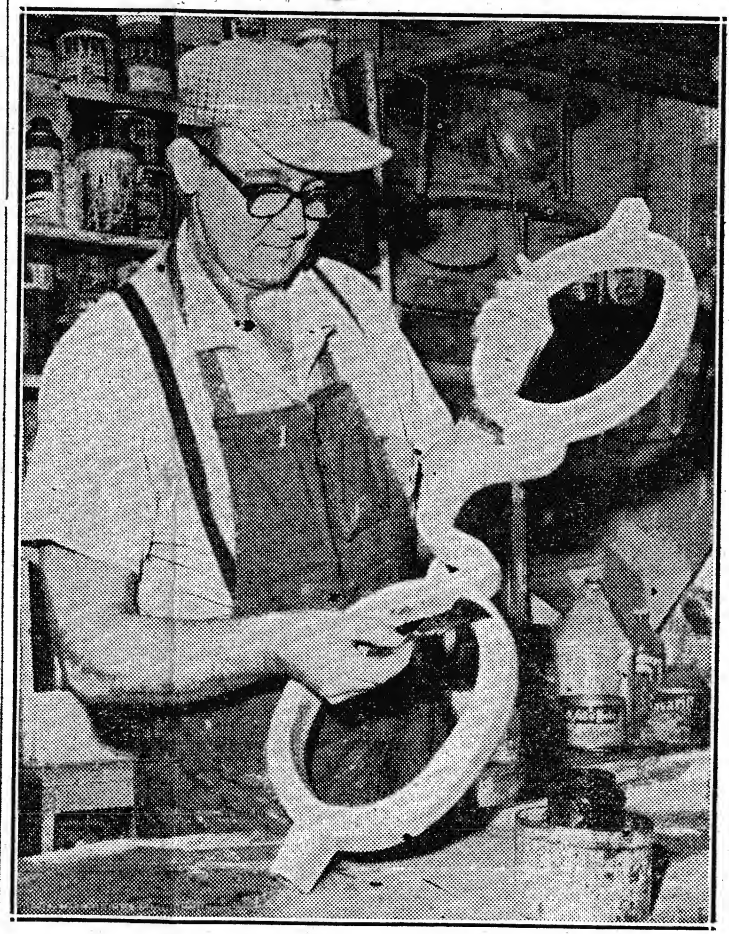
The Point Is, New Signs Should Look Real Old

On this machine-produced letter the craftsman goes to work with small chisels of varying shapes and sizes, hand carving them to a particular style, adding a touch here, a flourish there. The whole thing is further shaped and smoothed on a belt sander and by hand.

Then, after going to all that trouble to produce a work of art, the antiquing begins, and the finished product takes a beating — sometimes literally.

At 1:30 one afternoon, I picked out a carved boot wall plaque of smoothly sanded white pine. It looked clean and blankly new. Two-and-a-half hours later, that boot had aged 50 years.

They did it with shellac and size.



Al Narvydas, advertising artist, applies shellac as a first step in antiquing out-size, white pine spectacles.

to the white pine, and that in itself gives the wood a slightly disreputable look. When it dries, the piece is painted with "size," an orange-red looking glop that gets very sticky as it dries. Once it achieves a certain degree of stickiness, the gold-leaf is applied.

Gold-leaf is a small filmy rectangle of real gold which has been beaten until it's 1/250,000th of an inch thick—or thin. It's inclined to drift away on the nearest breeze, but an experienced gold-leafer somehow manages to apply it on

New Second Ave. Signs

The results can be judged by visitors to the World's Fair's Belgium Village, many of whose quaint and ancient old-world signs originated just a couple of weeks ago in this Second Ave. shop in Manhattan.

When they're not designing and producing imitations, the partners are on the lookout for really old signs and letters. The tree-shaded yard back of their shop is strewn with the results of years of collecting. Some are fifty years old or more, and they lean against the wall or are mounted on equally ancient grilles and iron work.

The firm might actually be called a salvage company, for their work in rescuing abandoned signs from empty or about-to-be-demolished buildings. Short of carrying a step-ladder in his car, Blum will go to almost any lengths to get his hands on an old sign.

Some of the letters are used as models for future imitations. Others are sold as is. A woman artist joyously grabbed up a handful of broken numbers to use in a collage.

Hands Pointing Thataway Are Most Popular Item

Cheffo and Blum aren't always too certain how their products are used by the individuals who buy them—except for the hands pointing thataway. These are most popular—and often used much as the young actress used her French word — to tell guests where and which is the bathroom.

While the recent surge of interest in everything Early American can account for much of the commercial demand for antique signs, Cheffo and Blum are not guessing how long the vogue will last. They're just enjoying it.

If people ever stop ordering their custom-made, imitation antiques they can always turn their talents to something else. Like sign-painting, maybe.

THIS PRICE LIST FOR ORDERS $50.00 OR MORE
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WOOD LETTERS

	FLAT FACE				
	⅞"	1¼"	1½"	2"	3"
5"	$1.06	$1.47	$1.74	$2.11	$2.64
6"	1.28	1.74	2.07	2.53	3.19
7"	1.47	2.07	2.42	2.95	3.78
8"	1.69	2.33	2.75	3.39	4.44
9"	1.89	2.64	3.12	3.81	5.15
10"	2.11	2.90	3.43	4.22	5.94
12"	2.53	3.48	4.11	5.06	7.63
14"	2.95	4.07	4.80	5.92	9.39
15"	3.43	4.64	5.43	6.60	10.52
16"	3.81	5.06	5.92	7.30	11.64
18"	4.75	6.18	7.13	8.56	13.77
20"	5.81	7.39	8.45	10.03	16.13
22"	6.97	8.71	9.88	11.62	18.64
24"	8.23	10.14	11.40	13.31	21.25
26"	9.61	11.66	13.05	15.09	24.00
28"	11.09	13.31	14.78	17.00	26.93
30"	12.67	15.05	16.63	19.00	29.94
32"	14.37	16.90	18.59	21.12	33.11
34"	16.15	18.85	20.64	23.34	36.39
36"	18.06	20.90	22.81	25.65	39.80
42"	27.70	31.02	33.24	36.56	54.19
48"	36.30	40.11	42.64	46.44	67.76

	½ ROUND, ROUND EDGE or BEVEL EDGE			
	⅞"	1¼"	1½"	2"
5"	$1.58	$2.00	$2.38	$2.90
6"	1.89	2.38	2.86	3.48
7"	2.22	2.79	3.32	4.08
8"	2.53	3.17	3.81	4.64
9"	2.86	3.58	4.27	5.24
10"	3.17	3.96	4.75	5.81
12"	3.81	4.75	5.70	6.97
14"	4.71	5.81	6.91	8.40
15"	5.17	6.38	7.55	9.13
16"	5.81	7.08	8.34	10.03
18"	7.13	8.56	9.99	11.88
20"	8.45	10.03	11.62	13.73
22"	10.03	11.77	13.51	15.84
24"	11.62	13.51	15.42	17.95
26"	13.46	15.53	17.58	20.33
28"	15.31	17.53	19.76	22.70
30"	17.16	19.54	21.91	25.08
32"	19.27	21.80	24.33	27.72
34"	21.38	24.07	26.77	30.36
36"	23.76	26.62	29.46	33.26
42"	34.34	37.66	41.00	45.43
48"	43.91	47.96	51.50	56.58

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